YUKON ADVISORY COUNCIL

ON

INDIAN CHILD WELFARE

ANNUAL REPORT

1994/95

102-03178/

YUKON ADVISORY COUNCIL ON INDIAN CHILD WELFARE

Box 5492 o Whitehorse, Yukon o Y1A 5H4

Pat Martin
Chair
667-4616

Agnes Johnson
Vice-Chair
841-5141

Wendy MacDonald
Administrative Assistant
667-2688

May 4, 1995

To The Honourable Willard Phelps
Minister of Health and Social Services
Government of Yukon
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 2C6

Dear Mr. Phelps:

It is a privilege of the Yukon Advisory Council on Indian Child Welfare to present our 1994/95 Annual Report.

Yours truly,

Pat Martin
Chair

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MESSAGE FROM CHAIR:

Greetings! As the newly appointed Chair of the Advisory Council on Indian Child Welfare, I would like to express sincere gratitude to our out-going Chair, Mary Kane. It was with much regret to see Mary leave the Council, but more so to see her leave the Yukon. Mary has returned to her homeland to pursue some long awaited educational goals. We are deeply appreciative of Mary's dedication and sincerity, for all the work and endeavour's contributed toward the well-being of our children. We wish her well and hope to see her soon.

Although there were some out-going members, we also saw the installation of new members. I would like to thank Barbara Hobbis for all she has contributed to the Council and to also wish her well in her educational goals. A warm welcome to the new members and hope that they will feel that their contributions to the Council are very much appreciated and that their input to the Council is valuable.

The Council would like to improve their consultations with Yukon First Nations and invite interested ones to attend any of our scheduled meetings throughout the up-coming year. There is an open invitation to bring any concerns or issues to the Council.

Pat Martin

Chair

MEMBERSHIP

*Mary Kane, Chair: Whitehorse

Pat Martin, Chair: Whitehorse

Agnes Johnson, Vice-Chair: Burwash Landing

Percy Henry, Elder: Dawson City

Jane McIntyre: Whitehorse

Vera Owlchild: Whitehorse

John Edzerza: Whitehorse

*Barbara Hobbis: Whitehorse

Sandra Johnson: Whitehorse

Kathy Magun: Whitehorse

Dorothy John: Ross River

Lorraine Sterriah, youth: Ross River

*Member resigned during this reporting period.

INTRODUCTION

VIRGINIA SMARCH

The Yukon Advisory Council on Indian Child Welfare dedicates this Annual Report to Virginia Smarch who passed away January 1994. Virginia has been one of Yukon's most outstanding leaders. The Council was privileged to have her serve as its elder for over three years.

Out of respect for Virginia's family traditions, the Council has not made a printed tribute to her until now—though memory of her never faded. Through failing health, Virginia continued to keep the welfare of all children, whom she called "my children," foremost in mind. She was particulary concerned about children in care and in custody. She worried, "when the children are taken away, they are shut up, and we aren't there, so they think we don't care." However, any child who knew Virginia, knew she cared. Her determination and continual hope will always motivate Council members.

Council is also grateful to Virginia's family for their constant support in helping Virginia travel back and forth from Teslin to Whitehorse to attend meetings. Virginia was seldom absent.

MANDATE

The Yukon Advisory Council on Indian Child Welfare was established in August 1988 under the Regulations pursuant to the Children's Act, Section 177. Its mandate is to advise the Minister of Health and Social Services on matters concerning the welfare of First Nation children in the Yukon.

MEMBERSHIP

Mary Kane, who was appointed to the Council in 1989 and served as Chair since 1990, resigned in June 1994. Barbara Hobbis, the Council's first Chair, resigned in October 1994. Mary and Barbara have been strong pillars in promoting child welfare causes on the Council and in the communities.

The Minister appointed Pat Martin as Chair and Agnes Johnson as Vice-Chair. Pat was previously serving as Vice-Chair. There were also three new appointments during the fiscal year: Percy Henry as Council's elder in May, 1994; Sandra Johnson in February 1995, and Lorraine Sterriah as Council's youth in February 1995. These new appointments brought the membership up to ten.

MEETINGS

The Council held five meeting during the 1994/95 fiscal year. These meeting were held at the Yukon Indian Centre in Whitehorse on the following dates:

- May 12, 13, 1994
- June 16, 17, 1994
- October 6, 7, 1994
- December 8, 9, 1994
- February 16, 17, 1995

In addition to the Council members, the following guests attended:

Health and Social Services:

- Mr. Willard Phelps: Minister of Health and Social Services
- Linda Dixon: Executive Assistant
- Bruce McLennan: Deputy Minister
- Bonnie Clark: Assistant Deputy Minister
- Anne Sheffield: Director of Family and Children's Services
- Tim Brady: Manager of Youth Services
- Larry Whitfield: Supervisor of Custody Services
- Elaine Schroeder: Supervisor, Family and Children's Services
- Maxine Kehoe: Supervisor, Placement and Review Committee
- Donna Wilkinson: Yukon Family Foster Association
- Brenda Dion-Walchuk: Social Worker, Family and Children's Services

Other Government Agencies:

- Joy Waters: Director of Corrections, Department of Justice
- Paula Pasquali: Psychologist with Mental Health Canada
- Fred Smith: Superintendent of Schools, Department of Education
- Don Roberts: Principle of Jack Hulland Elementary, Department of Education
- Terry Price: Education Review Steering Committee, Department of Education

First Nation Agencies:

- Margaret Clark: First Nations & Inuit Programs for Brighter Future Initiatives
- Sandy Gleason: Program Manager, Justice Services, CYI
- Ron Morberg: Elders' Council, CYI

Other Agencies:

- Sandra Gibbs: Manager of Group Homes
- Anne Turner: NHRW/BSW, Yukon College
- Lynne Harris: Coordinator NHRW/BSW, Yukon College
- Val Liske: Coordinator, Coalition for Yukon Children
- Irene Szabla: Director, Child Development Centre

HIGHLIGHTS FROM MEETINGS

The Council discussed many issues effecting children. Some of these issues involved the Department of Education and Justice. The Council obtained approval from the Minister of Health and Social Services to address these concerns with the appropriate Minister. Some of the issues addressed were:

- Family Court Custody Hearings: The Council requested judicial bodies to develop a family court system and provide extensive training on the needs of children to court officials. It was also requested that adjournments be accepted to allow each party time to prepare for a hearing; that children be consulted; and that the child's culture be considered.

- Slowness of Judicial System: Council approached the justice system with a concern over the way court judgements are delayed. It was particulary concerned with cases involving FAS/FAE children. It is known that these children need their actions addressed immediately for them to understand the wrong committed; however, some youth have been waiting for exceedingly long periods–in some cases, over two years.

- Educational Concerns: The Department of Education was approached with a number of concerns. The Council discouraged the use of time-out rooms. It was felt that this form of discipline tended to punish a child for having a special need. Studies in Alberta show that time-out rooms destroy a child's spirit and have abolished their use. These rooms also promote flashbacks of past abuse.

The Council also recommended that more resources be provided for special needs children and that individual educational plans be developed, rather than mainstreaming children. It also recommended that financial compensation be made to foster parents providing home schooling or accompanying their foster children at school, when these are required.

The following issues were brought to the Minister of Health and Social Services:

- Counselling and Support Services: The Council requested that more counselling services be provided by the CATS program, especially in regional delivery.

  Support services were requested for children under 12 years of age who are at risk. Many of these youths are left to wander the streets when they should be in school. These children often end up in trouble. Council believes that early intervention is the best preventative measure.

  The department provides many resources for care givers of open custody youth; however, Council questioned the lack of support—through monetary compensation, training, and respite—given to foster parents, whose needs, at times, may equal or exceed that of open custody care givers. Council requested respite care for foster parents and parents who have hard-to-manage children. It also requested a provision to provide supervision services for these children on short-term notice. This is necessary to prevent youth from getting in trouble during time off school while their care givers/parents are working or required elsewhere. A drop-in-centre was also encouraged to provide support for these care givers.

- Youth in Care: Council recommended that the receiving home be restructured to separate younger children from older ones. It is known by both the department and the supervisor that this is a problem. The younger children are often bullied by the older ones and the danger of sexual abuse is very real.

  Council also expressed concern with the length of time that some children are kept in the receiving home, sometimes exceeding one year. This institutionalizes children, interfering with normal social and emotional development.

The Council also participated in giving input into the Working Committee on Comprehensive Services for Child Sexual Offenders, the Educational Review Submission, and the National Foster Parent Guidelines.

Members often are asked to sit on other boards and committees. During this fiscal year members participated on the CAPC Steering Committee, Tendering Process for Northern Network of Services Steering Committee, National Head Start Initiative, and the Presidents Committee on Bachelor of Social Work Program.

GOALS FOR 1995/96

The Council is again striving to make plans for a child welfare conference for First Nations. The conference will provide on opportunity for all to learn about existing services; child welfare issues; research and statistical information for the Yukon; problems facing youth and proposed solutions; our youth and the public school system; FAS children, their parents and meeting their specific needs; other jurisdictions direction, and many other subjects.

The Council needs First Nation input into child welfare concerns and direction on how to assist our children. Therefore, the Council's primary goal for the year is to working with First Nations, listening and assisting them in reaching autonomy, where their children are concerned.

YUKON ADVISORY COUNCIL ON INDIAN CHILD WELFARE
FINANCIAL STATEMENT
FOR YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 1995

Revenue:			
1993/94 Surplus Funds	6 295.67		
1994/95 Contribution Agreement	40 000.00		
1994/95 Contribution Agreement, MN Conference	5 080.00		
TOTAL REVENUE			51 375.67
Expenditures:			
1994/95 Council Meetings:			
Honorariums	22 400.00		
Travel	5 320.80		
Accommodations	2 456.09		
Meals & Incidentals	3 209.30		
Child Care	1 248.00		
Refreshments/Luncheons	515.01		
Administrative Support	9 622.50		
Telephone	268.28		
Office Supplies and Other Expenditures	160.70		
TOTAL MEETING EXPENDITURES		45 200.68	
Minneapolis Conference:			
Air Travel	2 193.18		
Conference Registration	360.62		
Hotel Accommodations	1 464.52		
Meals/Incidentals/Ground Travel	904.18		
TOTAL CONFERENCE EXPENDITURES		4 922.50	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES			50 123.18
TOTAL SURPLUS, MARCH 31, 1994			**$1 252.49**